



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

16,000, and there was no reason to suspect their authenticity. The Finns were especially interesting, from their presumed connexion with the brachycephalic populations of Europe; the historical evidence, though defective, seemed to show that they extended much further than at present.

The following letter was read from Mr. Murray, of Sydney:—

*Sydney, New South Wales, April 20, 1867.*

SIR,—Observing a notice of some “Ancient British Sculptured Rocks” in the third volume of the *Anthropological Review*, 1865, p. 293, it has occurred to me that there is some similarity between the figures given therein, and those which appear on an “aboriginal tomb tablet” which has been sent from this colony to the Paris Exhibition. I have had no opportunity of comparing them, as the volume I refer to has only just reached me, and I speak merely from recollection of the carvings on the tablet; but it occurs to me that the matter may not be unworthy of attention on the part of the Anthropological Society, and I trust you will, in consequence, pardon me for intruding upon you. The tablet is marked as No. 428 in the Catalogue of our exhibits, a copy of which I send you. The sculptures, I observe, are supposed to be of pre-historic antiquity, and of sepulchral character; and if the similarity exists, it will be interesting to contemplate in it another instance of man’s disposition, all over the world, to act under like circumstances in a like manner. It is possible that the social condition of the sculptors of those remote ages may not have been much in advance of that of the Australian aborigines of the present day. It has been a practice among the latter to place inscriptions, or rather rude marks, on trees in memory of the dead who were buried near: I have known it in many cases.

I also observed in a former volume of the same *Review*, that a question has been raised in your society as to the fecundity of Australian half-castes. Count Strzelecki, author of *A Physical Description of New South Wales*, was the first to raise a doubt upon this subject. But my experience, extending over very many years, leads me to believe that these people would, under equally favourable circumstances, be as prolific as any others. Count Strzelecki says, that the Australian aboriginal female will not bear a child to an aboriginal black man after having had one by a white man. I have, however, known nothing, in a long course of observation of the native races, to warrant this opinion; on the contrary, I have seen several black children who were born after their mothers had had children by white men. Nor does the race deteriorate by the cross. Among the half-castes may be seen as fine models of the human form as any that are commonly to be met with in the colony. That they are not more numerous is not the result of any inherent infirmity in themselves; it proceeds from other causes incident to their peculiar condition in life. The old blacks in the southern districts of New South Wales, and I believe throughout the colony,—although for this I cannot vouch from my own knowledge,—used, up to a certain period, systematically to destroy all the half-caste boys as they approached the

age of puberty. In 1839, I had occasion, as a magistrate, to investigate a case of this kind on the Murrumbidgee river, in the county of Murray. The blacks had assembled in the neighbourhood in large numbers,—they had *corrobberies*,—several half-caste boys were seen with them; they retired for a few days to a rugged, hilly, lonely country some few miles off; they returned, after an absence of some days, without these half-caste boys. A stockman gave me information, on oath, to the effect that he had come across their bodies burning in a bough-yard, which the assembled tribes had made near their late encampment; that there were eleven fires burning, and one body in each. I went the same evening to see whether any of the boys had been spared, but could find none. I asked several of the men, whom I knew well, what had become of them, but could get no information from them. I went next day with a party of police to examine the locality where it was stated these murders had taken place. We found a rude square enclosure, roughly made with boughs, and within it eleven separate heaps of ashes, each containing burned, or the remnants of burned, human bones. I did all in my power to prosecute the case to the utmost, but could procure no evidence inculpatory of any particular individuals. The case thus broke down; but the blacks, hearing of the investigation which was taking place, fled to the mountains, and did not return to that part of the country for fully two years.

These practices may account, in part at all events, for the paucity of half-caste men in the colony. Several are to be met with who in early youth attached themselves to the stations of the settlers, and remain in their service as stockmen or horse-breakers. I never saw an adult half-caste man living in their ordinary state with the aborigines. Half-caste women are commonly to be seen among them, but they too are subject to the destructive influences which are gradually exterminating the “autochthones” of Australia.

I endeavoured, after the incidents just related, to ascertain why the blacks destroyed half-caste boys; but all I could learn was that fears were entertained of their superior influence when they would have grown to manhood. A woman who had lost a well-grown son on this occasion—he was one of the eleven—was in great grief, and exclaimed to me several times, “Cawbawn me sorry massa, cawbawn me sorry; black-fellow always like that—black-fellow always like that.” This woman had then with her a black child, a pure aboriginal, which she bore subsequently to the birth of the half-caste she had lost.

But notwithstanding such cases as this, namely the destruction of the half-caste boys when they reach the age of puberty—and others indicating a cruel disposition, I cannot regard the Australian aborigines otherwise than as naturally a mild, gentle, affectionate, kind-hearted race. I could tell many a story within my own experience in illustration of the correctness of this opinion. In cases of public note I need but refer to the conduct of the wild tribes Captain Sturt met on his voyage down the Murrumbidgee in 1828; to that of Jacky Jacky towards poor Kennedy in 1848; and to the treatment of Mr. King, the sole survivor of Bourke’s party in 1860:—“They appeared

to feel great compassion for me when they understood that I was alone on the creek, and gave me plenty to eat. \* \* \* They were very anxious, however, to know where Mr. Burke lay, and one day when we were fishing in the water-holes close by, I took them to the spot. On seeing his remains the whole party wept bitterly, and covered them with bushes. After this they were much kinder to me than before.” —(*Vide* King’s narrative.)

I have known a son kill his father, and the circumstance was referred to at the time as a convincing proof of the natural and innate ferocity of the Australian savage. The case occurred fully a quarter of a century ago, but I did not then regard it in this light, nor do I now. The Australian aboriginal soon “melts into sorrow,” soon “maddens to crime.” When a man of any note among them is killed by the enemy, great is the grief, the humiliation, the mortification, of the tribe he belonged to, and great the triumph and the rejoicing of the enemy. In this case “Billatee,” the father, was a very old man; he had been a great warrior, and many had fallen by his hand; his enemies had vowed his death, and he had had some very narrow escapes—one then very recently. His son “Timati” was always kind and attentive to the old man—he was himself one of the most prominent men in the tribe. His father’s infirmities were increasing daily; he was in constant anxiety lest their enemies should succeed, and enjoy the great triumph of killing him, and to prevent it, killed him himself. The feeling which led him to this was akin to that attributed to the dying Douglas in the ballad—

“Earl Percy sees my fall.”

His sole object was to prevent his falling a victim to his enemies. But the tribe did not understand such casuistry. The “lex talionis” is their law. They formed a great hunting party a few days after for the purpose of spearing him, and they did spear him.

Nor have the aborigines in their collisions with the colonists been one whit more cruel than the colonists have been to them on the out-stations. It is a sad day for the savage when he comes in contact with the “outsiders” of our civilisation; and in this respect Australia has many a dark tale to tell.

Nor can I, after ample observation during a period of fully five-and-thirty years, regard the aborigines as by any means so low in the scale of intelligence as they are generally represented to be. I have lately seen, in the *Morning Post* of the 13th of February, a statement by Mr. Crawford to the effect that they are different from and inferior to all other races of mankind. If this is the case, all other races of mankind must be more highly endowed than I, for one, ever thought they were. Mr. Carlyle says her Majesty’s subjects, who are spread all over the world, and include every race, “consist of so many millions, mostly fools.” Mr. Carlyle is a very profound thinker.

A friend of mine, in my presence, once addressed an aboriginal in English, but the latter did not understand him. “Ah,” said my friend, “you are a stupid fellow.” “Well,” said the black, “why do you not speak to me in my own language.” He then addressed the gentleman in the aboriginal tongue, and as he did not understand him, retorted,

"Now *you* are a stupid fellow." At a large party, many years ago, at Regentville, the residence of Sir John Jamieson, about forty miles from Sydney, one of the guests gave a coat to one of the native blacks. He put it on and strutted about in it, apparently regardless of the state of his nether parts, which had no covering. One of the party asked him what his gin would say when she saw him in that fine coat. He answered immediately, "She'll say, what for massa not give it trousers too." I had this from Sir Richard Bourke, then governor, who was present.

Were it not for the length to which this letter has already extended, and my unwillingness to intrude further upon you, I would state some circumstances which induce me to form a very different opinion of the Australian aboriginal from that expressed by Mr. Crawford, but I may have the honour of addressing you on the subject at another time.

The interest I feel in the success of the Anthropological Society must serve as my excuse for addressing you at all. The tombs tablet to which I have referred, and two caps of clay—No. 422 of the catalogue—worn by aboriginal widows in mourning—shall be quite at your service after the exhibition for your society's museum if you should desire at all to have them. I will write on the subject in due time, to Captain Mayne (118 Cannon Street) agent for the government of this colony in London, and a commissioner representing it at the exhibition.

I likewise beg your acceptance of a volume descriptive of the Australian dialects, which has been printed at my instance for the exhibition. Philology ought to form part of anthropological science, and the work for this reason may be of some interest in your society. But my impression is that it can only be interesting in a philological point of view. In the grammatical part there may be much that is questionable. I have the honour to be, Sir, very faithfully yours,

Dr. James Hunt, F.S.A., F.R.S.L., T. A. MURRAY.  
President of the Anthropological Society, etc., etc.

P.S.—Some of the fossils referred to in the enclosed extract from the *Sydney Herald* may be worth careful examination.

The DIRECTOR said that the Council were exceedingly sorry that no earlier opportunity had occurred of communicating this important letter to the Society.

Mr. A. L. LEWIS said that the discovery of the inscribed tablet was one of great importance. It was curious that the inscriptions found on dolmens on the Morbihan were exactly similar to the forms of the tattooings on the New Zealanders; in like manner Dr. Seemann had found inscriptions on Central American monuments similar to those in Northumberland.

Dr. BELL cited some equally curious instances of correlation.

The DIRECTOR said that everyone present must have been deeply interested in the paper. The opinions of Count Strzelecki on super-fecundation was a most important point. He had never before heard of the practice of destroying half-caste boys. This was an important

matter for future investigation. As to Mr. Crawford's generalisations, they were obviously worthless after the statements of Mr. Murray, who was unquestionably the more competent judge of the two. It was evident that Mr. Murray took a warm interest in the Society, and would prove one of our most valuable local secretaries.

A report, of which the following is an abstract, was then read by Mr. Groom Napier, Local Secretary for Bristol, upon two unusually gifted Mulatresses:—

Mr. NAPIER thought it desirable to bring these two remarkable cases before the society, as illustrations of the exceptional characteristics of half-breeds. These had enjoyed the benefits of European education, which, in other cases under his notice, had not resulted in useful or elevated characters. The first was a daughter of a white by a pure negress. She was successfully educated, from fourteen years of age to twenty-eight, in Scotland, as a dress and staymaker. She suffered from home sickness, and returned to Tobago, a very exceptional circumstance in negro races, in whom family ties are universally spurned. In this case the very reverse took place; and she faithfully performed to her parent the duties of a daughter and fellow creature. To those who had educated her she ever remained attached and grateful, in this exhibiting some of the few good qualities to be found in the negro race.

In the second case, the mulatress was the product of a white planter through a full black girl. There was considerable intelligence manifested, and the child was educated in England from about her fourth year. Before the age of six she was able to read, and soon after to write. Self-confidence was soon exhibited; and at eight she was sent to school, where she remained at intervals until she was sixteen years of age, and then became a governess. As in other instances of negro peculiarities, music was strongly exhibited; and she is now organist of a parish church, and capable of conducting concerts. The religious sentiments are considerably brought out; and she is extravagant of her pecuniary resources,—a correlation not unfrequently found to exist in such circumstances. A low money-value has hence been assigned to her services, and she has met with little encouragement. Persons inferior to her in everything but colour have been preferred to her, and this in a country where, in the eye of the law, all shades are equally blended.

Her mind, Mr. Napier stated, was not original; her powers of assimilation were great, and there was considerable pride in her disposition, evidently a result of the negro afflatus. Her dignity was of more importance to her than the interests of her best friends. Her conduct exhibited great powers of resistance, and she was very contrary. In features she closely approximated to pure negro.

In contrast to these two instances of noble characters, he would give a few of the reverse from his own notes, which were far more common. A. N., a white planter, had a large coloured family. The eldest son was sent home to England at an early age, and placed in the family of a medical man at Cambridge. He graduated, and afterwards took